Adaptation history of an earth-built World Heritage

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Summary

Hollókő, the first Hungarian World Heritage site since 1987, is a perfect case study to investigate the changes in the theory, method and practices of earth-built architecture protection. The new status of the settlement led to Hungary’s acknowledged status within the international cultural heritage community. Furthermore, it brought new focus on cultural heritage management at the Hungarian government, as well as new economic benefits and lifestyle for the locals. Numerous scholarly and governmental reports were published about Hollókő in the last quarter century. These are critically analyzed to point out some elements of interconnectedness that must be reevaluated and used for future planning. The change in the use of and perception about earth-built architecture led to its heritage status, and the intensive monument protection activities catalyzed the modification among others in the locals’ common identity. This site is also a good case study to illustrate the changes of focus from the Venice Charta to the Nara Documents and its most current additions. The modified professional requirements, the locals' continuously forming responses and the necessary preservation and adaptation actions on the protected buildings, create a very vivid and complex picture that can serve as example for future cases as well.

Introduction

Hollókő is located in the mountains of Northern Hungary far from major roads or important cities. The village that was first mentioned in the early 14th century consists of elongated parcels with both farm and residential buildings. Houses have earthen or mud walls supported by wooden purl in structure and are covered with reed or tiled roofs. They usually show kitchen – room – pantry plain type and have wooden porches too (Wiebenson 1998) (Fig. 1). The international reputation of Hollókő motivated the formation of numerous other organizations focusing on the protection of earthen architecture in Hungary (Hollókői civil szervezetek 2011). It also led to many national and international specialized professional conferences, such as the Békés Vernacular Architectural Conference every second year (Népi Építészeti Tanács 2014), and meetings for the establishment of the Vernacular Architecture Charta (ICOMOS 1999). Besides all the positive outcomes, the perception of the settlement and its transformation has changed drastically throughout the decades. Past processes can be highly criticized within our contemporary notions. The changing needs of the locals, which have led to the formation of a new village and the depopulation of the World Heritage site, are just one striking consequence. The attention seems to have shifted from culture and protection of heritage, to tourism and leisure as the Facebook category of the settlement indicates (Fig. 2). Accordingly, the village is a perfect example of continuous transformation due to diverse time periods and the shifts of emphases in UNESCO World Heritage management.
1. DIFFERENT FUNCTIONAL REUSES OF EARTH-BUILT HERITAGE AT DIFFERENT PERIODS

1.1. Before the protection processes, what has been lost completely?

It is important to state that when monument protection started in the 1950s, the village was at the brink of its existence. Its population had dramatically decreased, it lost its identical prefecture status and was a co-settlement with the neighboring Nagylóc village (N. Waigand 2013). Viola Tomori conducted research there in the 1930s that has been published multiple times, including before the settlement received its world heritage status. Tomori speaks about the inhabitants, who live in symbiosis with nature and have no connection with contemporary human world (Tomori 1986). Such a description interprets the settlement and the locals as ancient and almost pre-civilized. Furthermore, Zoltán Szabó described the village in 1930, stating that “the village exists isolated within its surrounding as the nut or the pearl in its shell” (Szabó 1986). This image alludes to the timelessness of the national narrative (Hall 1997).

The re-establishment of this lost, pure state has reached total sovereignty. Building structure and hand craft motifs that were evaluated previously as a combination of regional characteristics are seen today as an identical and typical motif system of Palócz culture, the ancestors of the locals, which are an already integrated Slovakian minority, or even of Hollókő (Ács 1990). The traditional Palócz vernacular architecture trends (ICOMOS 1987) that are mentioned in the World Heritage proposal dated back to the 18th - 19th century, when this minority was a unique and distinct group. This changed in the late 20th century when the settlement achieved its new status of international acknowledgement, and the named minority had already integrated into mainstream society (Magyar Néprajzi Lexikon 1977-1982). Moreover, the entire village was completely burnt down in 1909, and only the structure and the characteristics point back to the pre-20th century period (Koris 1992). Accordingly, the current status of Hollókő cannot be identified as original Palócz vernacular architecture (Fig. 3).
1.2 monument protection and the impact of Socialist ideology

After the monument protection specialists identified this area, they enlisted the territory in official monument- and protected area lists. First it was mentioned among the monuments of the county (1954), then a management plan formulated about the protection of the buildings that led to the official status of group of monuments in 1979. Due to the political and policy circumstances of that period (1950s - 1980s), the state first had to buy these buildings in order to be able to protect them. Hollókő’s successful protection was the result of the fruitful cooperation between protection and policy professionals (Dobosyné 2013). Continuity and tradition were ensured by the protection of the buildings and Ferenc Mendele’s ideology behind it. Mendele (1934-1994) was an Ybl-awarded architect, conservationist, and the former director of the National Inspectorate of Historic Monuments. He held and adapted the ideology that every function has to be present within the monument buildings (Mendele 1969). Along these lines, extra elements that were added later have not been counted as mistakes or attacks on authenticity. For example, a Hopper window was added later on the roof of a house that originally served as the post office. Later this building became post museum and hostel and to fulfill these functions the Hopper window was seen acceptable. Part of the justification for the newly added element was that it has an authentic look from outside as a garret window made by tin. (Magyar Építőipar 1991) (Fig. 4). Not just the houses, but also the natural surroundings of the village were protected in order to save the traditional agricultural methodologies still in used at that time (Mendele 2013). Similarly, the management of the Office for the Protected Landscape Area of Hollókőhas still required an old, traditional method of gardening (small plot gardens) that is not evaluated as an effective or sustainable methodology. This prohibited entirely any construction on the surrounding hillsides in order to ensure the living museum or mausoleum ideas of the settlement (Kiss 2013).
Both types of activities were carried out mainly by scholars and professionals in the field of cultural heritage to take care of Hollókő. The main target groups: tourists, pioneer groups and artists have to be mentioned too. These communities were envisaged to use the advantages of the conserved monuments, by transforming them to motels, artists’ residencies and weekend houses. The conserved monument buildings went through a transformation in function due to the existing “socialist monument policy” (Galambos and Román 1967), which identifies the main aim of the protection steps as the transformation of the monument into a venue for cultural educational tasks of Socialism. In order to draw the attention of these targeted groups to Hollókő, a national campaign was launched. As a part of that, the female chorus of the village participated and won the nation-wide, televised art talent contest in the 1970s (Farkas 2013).

1.3 after the change of regime

After 1989, the scholarly acknowledgement and appreciation of the Hungarian monument protection steps, realized in Hollókő, have continued. This also helped to strengthen the role of conservators both within the country and internationally as well. The higher education of this profession, as well as the necessary structure of institutions nation-wide and the necessary legal frameworks (missing laws and regulations), was smoothly formulated after the political change of the country. Similarly, the success of Hollókő was undiminished. A remodel of a house from Hollókő, with original furniture in it, was exhibited at the 20th Anniversary of the World Heritage Convention in 1993 at the UNESCO headquarters in Paris. This was a representation of the village that illustrated Hungary’s architectural values and its folk art, as well as that of all Central Europe (Koris 1993). The settlement became a special destination, a kind of exotic attraction for foreign tourists, to whom the scenery and the folk programs were successfully offered (Őrsi 2013). Also, partly due to the same aim, the monument houses and accordingly, the entire old village, turned into a theatrical stage. The street of the Old Town has been covered with concrete and electric street lights that have been introduced for the visitors’ convenience (Mezősiné 2001).

A more recent social movement called festivality can also be noticed (Gábor 2000). Today, festival after festival is organized in Hollókő. Not only the traditional Easter festival is celebrated (Hollókő Easter Festival 2015), but also diverse events that are organized almost every month. Such events include wine feasts and the celebration of Saint Stephen, which recognizes the first king of the country and the anniversary of the establishment of Hungary (Hollókő’s official website). These touristic events are organized not just on the homepage of the settlement, but on various social media channels as well.
Moreover, Hollókő leaves its physical boundaries behind not just with the help of the social media, but also by participating in programs outside the village. They also create their own events outside the settlement, such as press conferences or introductory events in the capital, which is nearly 100 kilometers away (A Centrál Kávézóban mutatkozik be Hollókő 2014). These events represent the shift of importance from the earth-built houses to the intangible elements of heritage, in which the architecture serves only as symbols or metaphors of human activities (Fig. 5).

Globalization, as the leading force of the current time period, has many time opposing effects, as Stuart Hall points out (Massey 2002). If we adapt his notion to Hollókő and see the UNESCO world heritage initiative as a kind of cultural globalizing trend, we can understand why the participating actors’ have different views and possibilities. Sandra Lustig followed a similar chain of thought in her research, focusing primarily on Eastern or Central European Jewish Quarters. Here, she emphasized the possibilities and threats of the existing numerous requirements and the countless actors in these cases (Lustig 2009). Based on this chain of thought, the village also shares this complexity depending on whether Hollókő is connected to the past or to the present and if it is researched in its smaller or wider location. These views can also be mixed in numerous ways providing new combinations and understandings. For example while the inhabitants moved out almost fully from the monument buildings and established a new settlement next to the authentic one, they earn their income from the tourism and marketing activities of the historic settlement (Fig. 6). So, they stick to their local unique identity, while they use the possibilities of the world heritage status.
Even though many try to maintain the original and traditional identity of Hollókő, the settlement is not a living village anymore and never will be again. Homi K. Bhabha offers a possible solution through the notion of translation. This new identity construction on one hand connects strongly to the past and traditions, but on the other hand it incorporates no intention to turn back to the past because such a notion is impossible (Bhabha 1994). Accordingly, Hollókő needs to have a dual identity that is interconnected. This identity must both protect and pass on its heritage as values (tangible and intangible elements alike), but also develop a contemporary Hollókő identity (not just as the keeper of the lost values and lifestyle) (Fig. 7). In order to achieve this, all actors should cooperate. Hollókő would not have reached such success only through the activities of the locals. Rather, scholarly professionals and political support were both needed and are still needed. Similarly, without the daily activities of the inhabitants of the village, not only the heritage values but most probably the settlement itself would have already disappeared.

![Fig. 7 local girl with modern jewelry and in flip-flops acts out intangible heritage](http://kalandok-cirm.blogspot.hu/2010/06/holloko.html)

**Conclusion**

Based on certain scholars’ views, these changes are signs of the natural adaptation to modern times. Also, according to the world heritage status description, Hollókő is a living village, and as such, it follows the current trends and changes of life (Fejérdy 2008). Others would initiate a rethinking of the concept of Hollókő, as the original values are not fully present there (for instance, the locals have moved out from the old buildings, hence there is no living settlement any more) (Sonkoly 2010). It is important to point out that even though Hollókő has lost the features through which it gained its world heritage status, there has not been any complaint or reaction in this regard from the international community. This alludes to the fact that modifications took place within the international organization as well by moving the emphasis to other aspects of the requirements. Nowadays, besides authenticity, integrity and outstanding universal values (that one can find for instance in the Venice Charter; ICOMOS 1964), cultural relativism and the participation and involvement of the locals are also important requisites in the evaluation processes (as the Nara Doctrine formulated it; ICOMOS 1999) (Fig. 8).
Fig. 8 Montage of Hollókő with its tangible and intangible heritage
http://www.itthon.eoldal.hu/cikkek/termeszetvedelem/holloko.html

Bibliography


Biographical notice:

Melinda Harlov-Csortán's research topic is the establishment of UNESCO World Heritage Cultural sites in Hungary as a combination of the international norms and the local circumstances. Her comparative approach is ensured by attending both national and foreign scholarly programs; presenting and publishing her research at Hungarian international platforms.